

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and notes on
Newfoundland and Labrador's
Intangible Cultural
Heritage Program

December 2013
ISSN 1918-7408

ich@heritagefoundation.ca
Heritage Foundation of NL



In this Issue:

- Page 1 ICH Mini Forum
- Page 2 Legge Homestead
- Page 3 Armagh Rhymers
- Page 4 Christmas Memories

ICH Mini Forum, Friday December 13th

It has been a busy year for intangible cultural heritage projects in the province, and so this December, we are hosting an ICH Mini Forum, at the MMaP lecture hall (the old art gallery space) at the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre. The event starts at 1pm, and a number of speakers are giving quick-and-dirty presentations on what they've been working on this year. It is a chance for us to showcase what the Heritage Foundation has been working on, and also a chance to show what is happening at Memorial University, with local community groups, and individuals involved in folklore, oral history, and cultural documentation and presentation. Speakers include:

- Andrea O'Brien - Heritage Foundation of NL Poster Contest**
- Chris Mouland - The ICH Inventory and the Digital Archives Initiative**
- Lisa Wilson - Bay Roberts ICH Projects**
- Nicole Penney - Review of the Baccalieu Trail Heritage Corporation Oral History Collection**
- Claire McDougall - ICH Policy Research**
- Sarah Ingram - Wells and Springs Research Project**
- Kayla Carroll and Christine Blythe - The Quidi Vidi Folklore Fieldschool**
- Edward Millar - Rugelach on the Rock: Cooking up Public Folklore Workshops**
- Chris Brookes - Inside Outside Battery: An Interactive Adventure in Sound**
- Christina Robarts - Newfiki: A Celebration of Russian-speaking Cultures in Newfoundland**
- Jason Ross Sellars- The 5th Annual Mummers Festival**
- Crystal Braye - Wooden Boat Museum Fieldwork**

The event is free, and open to the public! RSVP to sarah@heritagefoundation.ca

Freda Gillis and the Legge Homestead

By Andrea O'Brien

Several years ago while driving through the rolling farmlands of Bay St. George I happened upon a very distinctive house. Surrounded by wild, overgrown meadows, it lay at the end of a path beaten through tall grass. It looked unlived in. It looked as if it belonged in another time and place. Being in the area on other business, I snapped a quick image and continued on my way. But I often thought about that seemingly out of place house and the lives that might have been lived within it.

Twice a year the Heritage Foundation accepts applications for Registered Heritage Structure designations. This past March an application for the house that had stopped me in my tracks came across my desk. Finally a name was put to the mystery house – the Legge Homestead. It was reported to have been built in the early 1900s - strange considering its style, which is similar to an English country cottage. Similar examples of this style in the province are much older.



The application mentioned that the builder was Richard Cook (*left*) and that he was a well-known craftsman in the area. My interest was piqued so off to Google I went, not expecting to find much. What I found were conflicting census records reporting variously that Richard Cook was born in Newfoundland and England. Then I came across a message on a genealogy forum by Stephen Gillis. The information seemed to jive with what I had found so I sent off an email.

Turns out Richard Cook was his great grandfather, and Richard's daughter, 102 year old Freda, was living in St. Fintan's, Bay St. George and was reportedly a great storyteller. In June I travelled to St. Fintan's and had a chat with Mrs. Gillis, who told her father's story and solved the mystery of the Legge Homestead.

Richard Cook was born in Newfoundland in 1873 to English-born parents. When he was 11 years old, Richard and his sister were put aboard a ship bound for Sherborne, Dorset, England. Once there, they stayed with their grandparents and were enrolled in school. Richard stayed on in England, met a girl named Florence from Sturminster Newton in Dorset (*below right*) and married. The couple had two

children and one on the way when they returned to Cartville in 1903.

Mrs. Gillis recalls "My Dad when he came, like he said, he had a hammer and a piece of board and a nail and a saw and he had to build a place for his family. And that was built right up in the woods...just big enough for us to live in." Later he built the Legge Homestead and several other houses in the same design.

Richard Cook and Richard Legge, for whom the Legge Homestead was built, were first cousins and the two families were very close. Richard Legge was primarily a farmer, raising livestock and growing vegetables. He also ran a dry goods store, a fox farm and managed the community post office from his home.

Richard Cook was a tradesman and spent much time away from home on various work sites. Apparently he was a very handy man. His marriage certificate lists his trade as "interior decorator," which was probably a term for a painter. Mrs. Gillis said that her father could also read blueprints and that basically he could turn his hand to any building





look at these houses. These houses were [like] this old house of Legge's in Cartyville. I thought right then, my dad was gone of course, I couldn't get it [certified] by anybody, but...I wondered if he had gotten the blueprint because on his marriage certificate found in Dorchester, England he was an accomplished blueprint reader...He probably brought the blueprint with him."

I think Mrs. Gillis hit the nail on the head. The Legge Homestead is certainly a throwback to a much earlier building style, and having spent his formative years in English villages dotted with cottages of this style, Richard Cook most likely did fashion the Legge Homestead on the houses he was most familiar with. What a great privilege it was to be able to talk to his daughter and discover the story of this house and its builder.

Mrs. Gillis celebrated her 103rd birthday on December 5, 2013. A very happy birthday to Mrs. Gillis!

(Photo of the Legge homestead by Mike Patterson, photo of Mrs Gillis by Peggy Bruce. Photos of Richard Cook, Florence Cook courtesy of the Gillis family, and the Legge family courtesy of the Legge family!)

related task. He spent several years working for the paper mill in Grand Falls but his English bride had no desire to move to the town. Mrs. Gillis figures that her mother was "so contented to get clear of the rustle of England...she settled down in Cartyville right in the forest."

On a trip to England Mrs. Gillis saw houses similar to the Legge Homestead and figured that her father got the plan for the house during his time in England.

"We were going from England to Scotland, due to the fact that I am very English and I was married to a very Scotch man and I wanted to see where he got all his credentials from, so we went to Scotland. And as we were going by in different places and different sections along I saw houses just like the house that was in Cartyville. And I called my daughter-in-law and I said just



With the Mummers Festival already in full swing into its fifth year, there are lots of ways to get involved, be it workshops, events, and the Mummers Parade on December 14th downtown. This year the Mummers Festival will also be offering a special treat - a group of North Ireland mummers, the **Armagh Rhymers**, will be joining the festivities!

Northern Ireland's Armagh Rhymers are one of Europe's most celebrated folk theatre ensembles. A respected professional group of entertainers that have delighted audiences for over 30 years with their unique blend of mumming, poetry, music, drama, song and dance. Their style is deeply rooted in the old Irish Mumming traditions and they are easily recognized by their willow masks. The Armagh Rhymers weave a web of poetry, music, singing and visual art that is entertaining, sometimes shocking, but never boring for any audience. This year there will be several opportunities to experience this amazing folk theatre group. Check out mummersfestival.ca for details! *(photo from armaghrymers.com)*

Sharing Christmas Memories

By Lisa Wilson

As much as the holiday season is a time for creating new memories, for many it is also a time of reflection. I always enjoy asking people for their Christmas memories, especially as the holidays approach. Some people will think back to when they were raising children, and the traditions that they continued or created for their young families. Others will go back farther to their own childhoods, recalling the excitement of bounding down the stairs on Christmas morning, even when there probably wasn't much under the tree. At one time, the gift of an apple and a pair of mittens was enough to make a child glow on Christmas day.

"We got an apple or an orange for Christmas," recalled Olive Strickland of Spaniard's Bay (right). "I had a great big coloring book that came with a pencil case, I thought I had the world when I got that. Or I got a doll for Christmas." She spoke happily about how the smallest gift would mean so much to her. And the smells in the house too, those were wonderful:

"It was no good to send Dad for a Christmas tree, he was only fit to cut it up and put under the horse for bedding so mom would go off, and we'd go with her, and we'd get a nice tree. We had no problem to get a tree. We just had to walk down from our house and go down to Grandfather's potato garden. We had lots of trees there. We'd put it up, and the smell of the tree through the house, and Mom making puddings, baking cake..." Thoughts of these holiday smells were enough to put a smile on her face.



When I asked the same question of Edmund Dawson, also of Bay Roberts, he had similar memories of the small things:

"That was the highlight of the whole year, Christmas. I remember in those years, we didn't have a furnace all the time, and I remember all the children getting up and I was the oldest of course. I would get up before them and have fires lit and have it warmed up with the fireplace going and everything. I used to do that every Christmas, every year. My siblings now look back at that and say, 'You know, you made it for us.' Christmas was important and it was important in many many aspects, because it was a time to be together." He then thought for a moment and remembered the special role of music on Christmas day: "Another tradition, and this was a lovely tradition that went away ...The Salvation Army used to come around on Christmas morning and play Christmas music or tunes for us, with their band. It was magical." For Edmund, his memories focused on the warmth of the fire and the promise of music on the snowy streets.

Finally Joyce Snow of Quidi Vidi Village, she reflected on her young children and the effort they would put towards her Christmas gift even in times of scarcity. This was her happiest memory:

"Mrs. Pittman, she had a store, a little variety store, and my boys used to go down there for Christmas. She'd get little novelties in, especially for Christmas. Perhaps it might be a pair of earrings for a couple of dollars. They'd pick it out, a certain thing, and she'd hold it for them. They'd pay it off a few pennies every now and then when they'd get it. They'd always have something for me for Christmas. Everyone, and that's where they used to get it, down Mrs. Pittman's. Some little things. It might be a package of...because I used to put my hair up in pins, bobby pins, it may be just a package of bobby pins, for fifty cents, but they'd pay it off when they'd get a few pennies."

The smell of a tree in the house, the gift of a warm living room, and a few bobby pins to put up your hair. These are the things that people remember as they move through life--they are warmed by the memory of the little things.

